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Organizational matters

Report of the first regular session 2016 (25 to 28 January 2016, New York)

Contents

Chapter		*Page*
I.	Organizational matters	2
	UNDP segment	
II.	Statement by the Administrator and country programmes and related matters	2
III.	Evaluation	7
	UNFPA segment	
IV.	Statement by the Executive Director and country programmes and related matters	8
	UNOPS segment	
V.	Statement by the Executive Director	13
	Joint segment	
VI.	Recommendations of the Board of Auditors	14
VII.	Other matters	19

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I. Organizational matters

1. The first regular session 2016 of the Executive Board of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS was held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, from 25 to 28 January 2016. The President of the Board welcomed all delegations and thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their leadership and commitment to the work of the Board in 2015. He congratulated the new members of the Bureau on their election.

2. In accordance with rule 7 of the rules of procedure of the Executive Board, the Board elected the following members of the Bureau for 2016:

President:	H.E. Mr. Zohrab Mnatsakanyan	(Armenia)
Vice-President	H.E. Ms. Bénédicte Frankinet	(Belgium)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Mamadi Touré	(Guinea)
Vice-President:	H.E. Mr. Khiane Phansourivong	(Lao People's Democratic Republic)
Vice-President:	Mr. Tumasie Blair	(Antigua and Barbuda)

3. The Executive Board approved the agenda and workplan for its first regular session 2016 (DP/2016/L.1), and approved the report of the second regular session 2015 (DP/2016/1). The Board adopted the annual workplan for 2016 (DP/2016/CRP.1) and approved the tentative workplan for the annual session 2016.

4. Decisions adopted by the Executive Board in 2015 appeared in document DP/2016/2, which was available on the UNDP website.

5. The Executive Board agreed in decision 2016/3 to the following schedule for future sessions of the Executive Board in 2016:

Annual session 2016	6 to 10 June 2016 (New York)
Second regular session 2016:	6 to 9 and 13 September 2016

UNDP segment

II. Statement by the Administrator and country programmes and related matters

6. In her opening remarks to the Executive Board (available on the UNDP website), the Administrator thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their commitment and support throughout 2015 and congratulated the newly elected President and Vice-Presidents for 2016. The session was webcast live and, in a short film, the Administrator highlighted UNDP work in 2015. She said that in 2106 the international community had a huge opportunity to make real progress on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the related global development agendas. She mentioned a ministerial meeting that UNDP was organizing on 24 February 2016, marking its fiftieth anniversary, and indicated it offered a prime moment for partners to reach a shared understanding of the UNDP role in translating the ambitious commitments of the 2030 Agenda into concrete actions and results.

7. Turning to current work, she highlighted the UNDP role in response to crises. First, she drew attention to the migration and displacement of millions due to conflict, a trend that was pushing security and humanitarian concerns to the top of the agenda. There was the urgent need

to focus on root causes, and vital for all partners to work across the old humanitarian and development lines to ensure the most effective response. The report of the High-level Panel on Humanitarian Financing set by the Secretary-General was helpful in charting the way forward. She highlighted UNDP work in the Syrian Arab Republic under a new two-year programme that would expand its resilience assistance, focusing on the most vulnerable groups, including the displaced persons and migrants. UNDP work in that area was built on the agreements reached at the 2015 Resilience Development Forum in Jordan aimed at better integrating humanitarian and development efforts, and at supporting national efforts and capacities of host communities and countries through, for example, the Jordan Response Plan. She also drew attention to the unstable situation in Burundi where UNDP was deploying a SURGE team for the crisis response and early recovery.

8. The Administrator in turn underscored UNDP work on the transition to constitutional government in Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, Libya, Mali, Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen, where the organization worked in various interrelated areas to support electoral processes in partnership with United Nations peacekeeping missions, and included: peace consolidation, violence reduction, restoration of state authority, state building, transitional justice and reconciliation, constitution making, rule of law, human rights, social cohesion, food security and livelihoods, delivery of basic services, and local resilience and recovery. She also drew attention to UNDP support to elections in Bolivia, Haiti and Sri Lanka, as well as other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean focusing on assisting electoral management bodies and strengthening civil society and citizens participation, especially that of women.

9. The 2015-2016 El Niño, she stated, was the strongest since 1950 and its impact on food security could last for two years. To counter its negative effects, UNDP was supporting early recovery initiatives and drought resilience work in hard-hit Ethiopia and the Horn of Africa jointly with the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and regional economic communities to strengthen national and regional coordination mechanisms. Similar UNDP work was also underway in the Central American 'dry corridor' in El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras and Paraguay, strengthening the national and regional response, boosting capacities, and ensuring United Nations humanitarian system coordination. In the Pacific, UNDP was engaged with the Government of Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu on emergency coordination and disaster preparedness through the UNDP Pacific Risk Resilience Programme.

10. The Administrator turned to implementation of the new global agendas, on which UNDP was working with the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) on the mainstreaming, acceleration and policy support (MAPS) approach. In 2015, UNDP had led the preparation with the World Food Programme and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) of the reference guide for United Nations country teams on mainstreaming the Sustainable Development Goals into national agendas, while it was developing a toolkit with UNICEF to support governments and stakeholders to accelerate progress on the goals. UNDP spearheaded the articulation of three key UNDP-specific drivers at the heart of the goals: (a) the 'whole of agenda' and the 'whole of society' approach; (b) mobilization of expertise and programme support around goals 1, 10 and 16, as well as other goals where UNDP had particular strengths; and (c) support to countries to monitor, report and apply lessons learned on the goals' implementation based on UNDP work on the Millennium Development Goals. On the recent agreement on climate reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Administrator highlighted that UNDP was well placed to turn the commitments outlined in the intended nationally determined contributions into ambitious climate action, given its work to date helping countries to finalize their intended nationally determined contributions.

11. She stressed that regular (core) resources were critical for the ability of UNDP to fulfil its mandate, and as such the continued downward trend in core remained a major concern. She hoped that partner Member States would reverse that trend in 2016 through, in addition to increased flows, a rise in the number of core contributors. UNDP would continue to strive to diversify its resource base, she stated, including with development banks, and the rolling out of a revised strategy to help the organization work better with the private sector and philanthropic institutions. A new key development was the creation of four new funding windows through which partners could contribute to supporting country-level efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals on: (a) sustainable development and poverty eradication; (b) climate change and disaster risk reduction; (c) governance for peaceful and inclusive societies; and (d) emergency development respons to crisis and recovery. She indicated that at least 15 per cent of the funds would be used for gender-specific activities to ensure a mainstreamed and integrated approach to women's empowerment and gender equality. On a related note, she stressed that UNDP was committed to transparency and accountability, maintaining its high ranking through the International Aid Transparency Initiative, and had regularly published its internal audit reports on the UNDP website, demonstrating its work was subject to rigorous and independent scrutiny.

12. In 2016, UNDP would undertake the midterm review of its strategic plan, 2014-2017, and was already gathering data and carrying out analyses, in order to identify good performance, explain shortfalls, and align it better with the 2030 Agenda. In parallel, the Economic and Social Council dialogues would provide important input to the 2016 review of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development. She noted that UNDP had worked closely with a diversity of partner Member States in putting together the new South-South and triangular cooperation strategy, and was in close partnership on its implementation with the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation. UNDP was also providing financial and technical support to the UNDG Task Team on South-South and Triangular Cooperation to map good practices and lessons learned into a user guide for country teams and governments. She highlighted that UNDP and other United Nations development system partners were working together to assist country teams in forging an integrated approach to the Sustainable Development Goals through the MAPS approach, which included closing the funding gap of 17.5 million for 2016/2017 biennium for the resident coordinator system. She hoped in particular for General Assembly Fifth Committee approval of the contribution from the United Nations Secretariat, under Member States leadership and support.

13. Board members welcomed the Administrator's statement and commended her strong leadership of the organization. They focused their comments on the importance and the challenge for UNDP to balance its central role in driving implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its critical work assisting countries and regions in the grip of humanitarian crises and protracted conflict. Harmonizing humanitarian and development interventions, they stressed, was critical not only to bringing an end to the world's many conflicts and crises but also to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

14. Drawing attention to the major global agreements of 2015 – the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Addis Ababa financing for development action agenda, and the Paris climate change agreement – delegations were pleased with UNDP efforts, along with the funds, programmes and specialized agencies, to define how to approach implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and other targets, grounded in national ownership and leadership. They appreciated the UNDP piloting of the UNDG MAPS approach to help to define indicators and to build capacity for data collection and analysis for the goals at the national level. They also welcomed the organization's development of pragmatic, operational guidelines on implementing the 2030 Agenda for governments and United Nations country teams. They looked forward to hearing the lessons learned from the MAPS pilot stage and welcomed other creative ideas to

accelerate country-level progress. They encouraged UNDP, as part of efforts to ensure continued United Nations development system coordination for the goals, to promote wider country adoption of Delivering-as-One standard operating procedures and their lessons learned. They concurred with the UNDP focus on goals 1, 10 and 16, and were especially keen to see UNDP foster rule of law and stable investment environments – two key elements for the success of Goal 16, a foundational goal, noting that, in the absence of just, peaceful and inclusive societies with strong and accountable institutions, all efforts would prove unfruitful. Similarly, they were pleased to see the organization's inclusion of gender equality and women's empowerment as crosscutting issues in each country's basic package of UNDP support.

15. A number of delegations emphasized that the overarching goal of all UNDP work in developing countries remained poverty eradication, especially in the least developed countries, as per the quadrennial review, built on the organization's crucial national capacity building role. In that regard, they noted that the paradigm shift, which the 2030 Agenda had engendered, placed productive sectors at the heart of the development agenda, as a result of which UNDP had to pay careful attention to the economic dimension of the 2030 Agenda, especially in the areas of employment, industrialization and infrastructure. They called on the organization to reflect that shift when realigning its strategic plan, 2014-2017, during the 2016 midterm review, to the 2030 Agenda, which, they indicated, should include a corporate review of the monitoring, aggregation and reporting systems related to the integrated results and resources framework, as per Board decision 2015/7, in order to boost its credibility and accountability. Engagement with UNDP on South-South and triangular cooperation was highlighted, including a request for increased consultations with UNDP on its new South-South and triangular cooperation strategy. Delegations also stressed the importance of UNDP work in middle-income countries and small-island developing states, where large pockets of entrenched poverty demanded that resource allocation criteria went beyond simple gross domestic product per capita to include pro-poor parameters.

16. While heartened by the promise of the 2030 Agenda, Board members expressed grave concern at the growing number of 'mega-crises' throughout the world – that included unprecedented numbers of displaced populations, underfunded appeals and the closing of humanitarian space – and the intense burden it was placing on the United Nations humanitarian system. They welcomed UNDP efforts to strengthen its crisis response capacity and encouraged all stakeholders to take advantage of the humanitarian gatherings in 2016, especially the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and the Syria Donors Conference 2016, in order to think creatively, put people at the centre of the international community's work, and to embrace a much needed paradigm shift in how to better integrate and harmonize humanitarian and development strategies. Humanitarian work, they stressed, must contribute to longer-term development gains, while development work must address vulnerabilities, inequalities and risks with greater urgency.

17. Delegations highlighted that 2016 was critical for the United Nations development system as a whole, as the 2030 Agenda had refocused common goals and provided a framework to gauge progress over the ensuing 15 years. As custodian of the resident coordinator system, UNDP had a lead role to play. It was therefore crucial, they asserted, to reform and retool the United Nations development system to ensure it provided the best quality assistance and the most effective and efficient delivery of results. They highlighted that the Economic and Social Council operational activities segment, its dialogue on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations development system, and the review of the quadrennial review offered the ideal forums to tackle those issues head on, including the overall structure of the United Nations development system. On a related issue, a number of delegations underscored the importance of inclusiveness in the United Nations development system governance structures, which had to reflect equitable representation of each region. Delegations highlighted the universal scope of the 2030 Agenda, which applied equally to both developing and developed countries and stressed that UNDP

should focus on its comparative advantages, which would come up in discussions on the longer-term positioning of the United Nations system. It was proposed to further discuss those issues during the annual session 2016.

18. In the light of the work ahead and the key leadership role of UNDP, Board members were keenly concerned about the organization's difficult funding situation, noting the dramatic drop in core funding from $1.1 billion in 2008 to $550 million in 2016. Referencing the quadrennial review, a number of countries expressed concern that UNDP would not achieve the critical mass goal and redress the core/non-core funding imbalance, through more flexible non-core resources aligned with the strategic plan and priorities, avoiding the use of core to subsidize activities financed through non-core resources. A UNDP overly dependent on non-core resources, they asserted, could jeopardize its universality and multilateral nature. Concerned that funding pressures would only worsen in the face of mounting humanitarian crises, they called on UNDP to continue to explore avenues to broaden and deepen its donor base, through both Member States and partnerships with non-traditional donors, including civil society, philanthropic institutions and the private sector. A group of delegations stressed that the universal consensus to 'leave no one behind' required that every country had to play an active role, commensurate with its means and abilities, not only to achieve the goals nationally but also to contribute in meaningful ways to help the United Nations development efforts in programme countries.

19. In response, the Administrator, recognizing the magnitude of the agenda and the high expectations placed upon the organization, underlined that UNDP was committed to poverty eradication as its main overarching goal, which was coherent with what was laid out in the 2030 Agenda and the UNDP strategic plan. UNDP sought to tackle the multidimensional aspects of poverty, building especially on the experiences coming out of Latin America and the Caribbean in order to share them globally. She emphasized on the issue of universality within the UNDP mandate that UNDP was a thought leader on development discourse, for example in support of Member States' design of the 2030 Agenda. It did not seek a development role in countries that was not within its mandate, but sought to maximise its comparative advantages where needed. On crisis-related work, UNDP, she affirmed, was working to assist displaced and migrant populations along with its partners, who strongly supported the organization's resilience-based approach, an area where UNDP could be particularly helpful in the midst of crisis. She stressed that UNDP would continue to adjust its business model based on its actual funding situation, but highlighted that while the organization actively sought to broaden its funding base – including through non-traditional donors such as development banks, the private sector, philanthropic institutions, private individuals, and the new proposed funding windows – only 51 Member States had contributed core resources to UNDP compared to more than 120 Member States that had contributed core to other United Nations development system organizations. She affirmed that UNDP would continue to actively engage with partner Member States on developing its strategy on South-South and triangular cooperation while it also continued to drive forward its South-South-related activities, which included the organization's commitment to working in the middle-income countries and small-island developing states. She noted on the least developed countries that UNDP was actively engaged in the Istanbul programme of action review process in 2016 and in supporting their graduation process. She reiterated that UNDP would allocate at least 15 per cent of resources from the four funding windows to mainstream the crosscutting issues of gender equality and women's empowerment throughout its work. She stressed that the United Nations development system was in the process of continual reform, as part of efforts to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, and included the adoption of the common MAPS approach among United Nations organizations. Similarly, UNDP was very engaged in supporting the Economic and Social Council dialogues and the 2016 quality review of the quadrennial review. She highlighted that the system was seized with the aim of ensuring greater gender and geographical representation in the resident coordinator pool. Finally, she assured the

Board that UNDP took on board and actively addressed all of the Board of Auditors' recommendations, and was ready to make available further information to the Board.

Country programmes and related matters

20. The Regional Director, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, UNDP, introduced the item. The UNDP regional directors for Africa, the Arab States, Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States, and Latin America and the Caribbean elaborated on the draft country programme documents Argentina, Azerbaijan, Ethiopia, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania and Uruguay, as well as the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Brazil, the Dominican Republic, Ghana, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Trinidad and Tobago, and Ukraine, and the two-year extension of the country programme for the Philippines.

21. The Executive Board reviewed and approved, in accordance with decision 2014/7, the following country programmes: Ethiopia (DP/DCP/ETH/3) and the United Republic of Tanzania (DP/DCP/TZA/2) for Africa; Iraq (DP/DCP/IRQ/2 and Corr.1) and the Syrian Arab Republic (DP/DCP/SYR/3) for the Arab States; Azerbaijan (DP/DCP/AZE/4) for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States; and Argentina (DP/DCP/ARG/3) and Uruguay (DP/DCP/URY/3) for Latin America and the Caribbean.

22. The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extensions of the country programmes for Brazil, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, and Trinidad and Tobago from 1 January to 31 December 2016, and for the Dominican Republic, Ghana, and Ukraine from 1 January to 31 December 2017, already approved by the Administrator (DP/2016/3).

23. The Executive Board approved the two-year extension of the country programme for the Philippines from 1 January 2017 to 31 December 2018 (DP/2016/3).

III. Evaluation

24. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, introduced the item. The Evaluation Manager, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, presented the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to mine action (DP/2016/4) and the Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP, presented the management response to the evaluation of the UNDP contribution to mine action (DP/2016/5).

25. Board members commended the Independent Evaluation Office for its report on the UNDP contribution to mine action and management for its response. They urged UNDP to ensure that the recommendations form the basis of future enhancements for its mine action cooperation. Delegations highlighted the organization's invaluable contribution to mine action, as recognized by the evaluation team, especially its work to strengthen the institutional capacity of national partners and improve the safety and security of mine-affected communities. They welcomed UNDP work to improve livelihoods and to facilitate South-South cooperation, and shared its vision for mine clearance and socioeconomic development, including victim assistance focused on disabilities and inclusive development. They also welcomed the UNDP emphasis on taking differing approaches to women, men, boys and girls in mine-risk education, and its application of a gender perspective. They stressed that UNDP work on mine action should be shaped by the priority outcomes in agreed country programmes, and encouraged UNDP to work with national governments to ensure that its demining activities had greater positive impact in poorer, more marginalized communities.

26. Delegations stressed that the organization's long-term strategic commitment to supporting ongoing mine action programmes be coherently supported at the headquarters and regional levels in order to provide technical advice, capacity support and practical guidance to countries transitioning to national implementation. Building national management capacities for mine action was key, including strong advisory services in UNDP country offices and better mainstreaming of mine action in broader development actions, especially for affected areas. That approach, they noted, should take into account local needs and risks before determining priorities, include clear indicators for success, engage civil society and other partners in development planning for post-conflict recovery, and strive for greater efficiency and accountability. They looked forward to UNDP reaffirming its work on mine action globally, and requested that UNDP reflect its work on mine action in future annual reporting and in the next strategic plan, while providing timely, results-focused reporting to donors of non-core resources.

27. In response to references made on links between mine-victims assistance and broader work on disabilities, the Evaluation Manager, Independent Evaluation Office UNDP, stated that the midterm evaluation plan had included an evaluation on disabilities inclusive development in 2015. He noted that the office would provide the results of that evaluation at the first regular session 2017, which would pave the way for discussions with management on the way forward on disabilities issues, taking into account the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and recognizing the evolving work of UNDP.

28. The Director, Independent Evaluation Office, UNDP, highlighted that the evaluators had sought to reflect evidence from the ground and local communities, which included many case studies that provided country-level evidence and that would help to aggregate information in order to demonstrate development results.

29. The Director, Bureau for Programme and Policy Support, UNDP, stressed that the UNDP role was to support efforts, in a neutral manner, to resolve the problems that landmines caused and to minimize casualties. He highlighted that while non-core contributions did help to fund mine action programmes, core resources guaranteed that UNDP had the technical and advisory capacity to build national capacities, maintain regional and global teams, and implement the programmes. He stated that while it had prioritized mine action in its strategic plan, 2014-2017, UNDP continued to respond to requests from programme countries and included mine action in its overall development work, complementing efforts of the United Nations Mine Action Service and other organizations implementing the Strategy of the United Nations on Mine Action, 2013-2018. He emphasized the tremendous South-South cooperation exchange driving results on mine action, and underscored that resource mobilization should complement UNDP expertise and coordination capacity in discussions with donors to back those efforts. He noted that under international rules on war UNDP could only engage in mine action activities once conflict had ceased. He stressed in closing the importance of knowledge and information sharing in efforts to find and demine mine-affected areas.

30. The Executive Board adopted decision 2016/1: evaluation of the UNDP contribution to mine action and management response.

UNFPA segment

IV. Statement by the Executive Director and country programmes and related matters

31. In his statement to the Executive Board (available on the UNFPA website), the Executive Director, UNFPA, thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their commitment,

leadership and guidance throughout 2015. Their active engagement in the open working group on the Sustainable Development Goals and post-2015 consultations had ensured that the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) agenda and the rights, health and empowerment of women and young people were firmly woven into the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals. He highlighted that endorsement of the demographic dividend by the 2030 Agenda opened a unique opportunity for UNFPA to accelerate action on the core aspirations of ICPD Beyond 2014. He congratulated the newly elected President and Vice-Presidents for 2016, noting that it would be a pivotal year for the international development community as it began implementing the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

32. The Executive Director highlighted the multilateral achievements of 2015, including the adoption of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris climate change agreement made at the 21st Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the Addis Ababa action agenda reached at the Third International Conference on Financing for Development. The latter, he noted, aimed to align financing flows and policies with economic, social and environmental priorities, and emphasized the need to mobilize domestic resources. While stressing that financing was the linchpin for the success of the Sustainable Development Goals, he underlined that the funding landscape remained a challenge – a situation that demanded new thinking, new partnerships and new ways of doing business.

33. He underscored the importance of predictable core funding to allow the Fund to maintain high-quality services and fulfil its mandate. In 2015, he noted, there had been an $80 million drop in core resources due mainly to unfavourable exchange rate fluctuations, with a further fall expected in 2016. Non-core funding, mostly for non-thematic streams, were overwhelmingly short-term commitments, making it difficult for UNFPA to maintain its robust institutional framework, including post freezes. To meet the challenge head on, UNFPA, he affirmed, had established a non-core funding management unit and was in close dialogue with donors to improve the core funding situation while it continued to drive innovation in operations and programme delivery.

34. The UNFPA mandate, he affirmed, had never been more relevant. Sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women and young people were key to sustainable development, to unleashing the power of the demographic dividend, and to building resilience. Stressing that the ICPD and the 2030 Agenda only reinforced each other, he stated that the Fund would focus its major investments under the 2030 Agenda on family planning, the demographic dividend, humanitarian response and resilience building, and data for development.

35. The Fund's family planning activities, in pursuit of reaching the 'farthest behind', was based on the UNFPA supplies programme – the largest global fund for family planning and the largest supplier of contraceptives. The programme was key to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and the Family Planning 2020 goals of reaching 120 million women and girls with modern contraception by 2020. He highlighted that although since 2007 the supplies programme had saved over 700,000 lives and billons of dollars in health-care spending in countries with the highest unmet needs, there remained a global funding crisis in family planning – estimated at a $1 billion gap for the programme over the next five years, potentially jeopardizing its impact across the globe.

36. The Executive Director underlined that the Fund's work to optimize the potential of youth and adolescent girls – through the demographic dividend – focused on creating conditions to empower them to exercise their right to sexual and reproductive health and family planning. The Fund was working to advance that initiative with partners through, for example, the World

Economic Forum, the World Bank, the Sahel Women's Empowerment and Demographic Dividend project, and faith-based organizations, among others, and by promoting high-level dialogue, facilitating regional efforts, supporting the development of national studies for national planning, and creating an enabling environment for multi-sector investment.

37. In crisis situations, he highlighted, UNFPA was providing sexual reproductive health services and responding to gender-based violence in the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen, South Sudan and the Central African Republic, among others, often in difficult conditions tainted by extremism and human rights violations. He noted that the *2015 State of the World Population* report focused on a transformative agenda for women and girls in crisis-prone countries. UNFPA looked forward to the Syria Donors Conference 2016 where it would appeal for more funding to meet the urgent demand of the internally displaced and refugees. Because some 60 per cent of maternal deaths globally occurred in humanitarian contexts, the Fund was a strong advocate for the Every Woman Every Child Everywhere agenda, including in crisis and disaster settings, providing services that included the sexual and reproductive health toolkit and the placement of expertise where needed.

38. In closing, he highlighted that UNFPA continued to support and develop data and statistical capacities, national population data systems, and the ability to collect, analyse and use disaggregated data for programming and to track progress. The 2016 midterm review of the strategic plan, 2014-2017, would provide an opportunity for UNFPA to refine its strategic direction, and better align them with the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development, which was also under review in 2016, and the 2030 Agenda. Similarly, the Fund was committed to ever more effective oversight and accountability.

39. Board members thanked the Executive Director for his effective leadership, and expressed their continued strong support for the work of UNFPA in both crisis and non-crisis countries in promoting and delivering sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights services, focused on women, youth and vulnerable populations. They were pleased with the Fund's focus on family planning, the demographic dividend, humanitarian response and resilience building, and data for development, as per the ICPD principles, the 2030 Agenda and Family Planning 2020. They stressed that, given its mandate, UNFPA was ideally placed to spearhead Sustainable Development Goals 3 and 5, which they viewed as crosscutting in nature for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the overarching goal to 'leave no on behind'.

40. Delegations strongly commended and endorsed the Fund's work in humanitarian settings, which they saw as crucial to peace, recovery and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. They were keen on the Fund's work with the internally displaced and refugees in the Syrian Arab Republic, Iraq and Jordan, and its response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa – especially for women and youth in remote areas, who needed assistance and capacity development for socioeconomic recovery. In that regard, they were especially seized by the particular fragility of and violence against women and girls in emergency settings, as documented in the *2015 State of the World Population* report. They urged the international community to seriously address those issues at the World Humanitarian Summit in 2016. Noting the centrality of sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, 2015-2030, they underlined the Fund's leading role not only in delivering assistance but also in ensuring that women and girls were able to be actors in building peace and security, and in laying the foundations for long-term development. That included the Fund's already successful work running its supplies programme, which made it a major player in providing access to contraceptive and reproductive health medicines, services and supplies, particularly in humanitarian settings. Welcoming the Fund's proposed reforms to the supplies programme, they expressed concern, however, that scarce resources were reducing actual supplies levels and potentially imperilling the impact of the programme.

41. Delegations stressed that the 2016 midterm review of the strategic plan was a good opportunity for UNFPA to course-correct its programme against the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, in line with its comparative advantages. Two delegations expressed their interest in the joint meeting of the Executive Boards in June 2016 serving as a platform to discuss system-wide issues and preparations for the 2016 review of the quadrennial comprehensive policy review of operational activities for development in order to better define the Fund's role in implementing the 2030 Agenda within the common United Nations vision. Others noted that UNFPA support to the least developed countries under the Istanbul programme of action should likewise remain a priority. They also saw the Economic and Social Council dialogues as key input for the entire United Nations development system to discuss the balance between implementing the 2030 Agenda and tackling the world's multiple humanitarian crises. It was suggested that the Fund play a greater role in global health governance, in particular in response to public health emergencies such as the Ebola outbreak and the rising Zika virus in Latin America, where maternal and newborn deaths were especially high. Those topics, they noted, should be discussed at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016 and the Syria Donors Conference 2016, preparations in which the Fund should actively participate.

42. Board members welcomed the Fund's priority focus on evidence-based planning, transparency and accountability, as well as its drive to build corporate, regional and national capacities for reliable, high-quality data gathering and analysis. They counted on UNFPA to help to improve the quality of data and development of indicators on population dynamics and access to sexual and reproductive health services. They welcomed the joint UNFPA evaluation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which recommended greater attention be given to implementing the Inter-agency Standing Committee guidelines and the mainstreaming of gender-based violence in the humanitarian response in the Syrian Arab Republic. On a related note, while appreciating the need to address the capacity needs of national institutions through capacity development, the Fund was asked to ensure its proposals for improvement were sustainable and backed by strong policies and adequate resources. Member States stressed that the success of UNFPA interventions across the globe had to be grounded in multi-stakeholder partnerships and tight coordination with other United Nations development system organizations.

43. Given that important mandate and given the continued slow economic growth in certain regions, delegations were concerned about the ongoing trend of declining core resources, which, they noted, could jeopardize the quality of UNFPA activities and distort priorities. They also asked about the financial health of the emergency response fund and the humanitarian response reserve, as well as UNFPA efforts to continually fund them, in light of the number of simultaneous crises to which UNFPA had to attend. They welcomed UNFPA efforts to undertake donor harmonization and interagency coordination in that area. Similarly, there was concern over staff cuts and moves at the regional level arising from the difficult financial situation. A group of delegations strongly underscored the key role of UNFPA regional offices in delivering technical expertise, access to regional and global networks, and sharing of good practices. Across the Board, delegations encouraged those in a position to do so to step up their contributions, while recommending that the Fund continue to make every effort to explore new, broader funding sources and partnerships and non-traditional arrangements, including with the private sector and through domestic financing.

44. In response, the Executive Director reiterated the Fund's commitment to engaging with all partners in implementing the 2030 Agenda and ICPD agenda, while underlining that UNFPA would have to do more with less resources and better coordinate with the United Nations development system. The Fund would work with the Board to address all issues raised in the mid-term review of the strategic plan, 2014-2017.

45. On the humanitarian front, he assured delegations that UNFPA would deliver its services transparently and work to ensure that gender and the protection of women and girls figured prominently at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016. He noted that UNFPA had used the emergency response fund successfully for humanitarian crises in Iraq and the Syrian Arab Republic, among others, while stressing the need for continued adequate funding to meet demand. On the Ebola response, he stated that more needed to be done to address diagnostics and to build strong health systems nationally and locally. On the Zika virus, UNFPA had taken steps through its country offices to ensure clarity of information and to provide prenatal health care services to women and girls.

46. He affirmed that the Fund actively sought out non-traditional resource mobilization avenues and had already reached agreements with countries to fund programmes to relieve pressure on core resources. He assured delegations that, despite its heightened focus on humanitarian crises and financial difficulties, UNFPA work in middle-income countries remained a top priority. The Fund would continue to engage in consultations with those countries and do its best to maintain post levels in regional and sub-regional offices. In that regard, he highlighted the potential of regional-level resource mobilization. He also welcomed the initiative of Brazil, the Russian Federation, India, China and South Africa (the so-called BRICS) to use South-South technology and knowledge transfer to help countries capitalize on the demographic dividend.

Country programmes and related matters

47. The UNFPA Deputy Executive Director (Programme) introduced the item. The UNFPA regional directors for the Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, East and Southern Africa, and Latin America and the Caribbean presented and elaborated on the country programmes for Ethiopia, Iraq, the Syrian Arab Republic, the United Republic of Tanzania, and Uruguay, as well as the two-year extension of the country programme for the Philippines, the second one-year extension of the country programmes for Algeria and Yemen, and the first one-year extension of the country programme for Ghana.

48. In their comments, delegations expressed concern with the lack of clarity around the country programme preparation and approval process. In that regard, they stressed the critical importance of programme country ownership of the strategic planning, drafting and implementation of country programmes, in line with the principle of national ownership, and with the participation of all stakeholders at the national level.

49. The Executive Board reviewed and approved, in accordance with its decision 2014/7, the country programmes documents for Ethiopia (DP/FPA/CPD/ETH/8), Iraq (DP/FPA/CPD/IRQ/2), the Syrian Arab Republic (DP/FPA/CPD/SYR/8), the United Republic of Tanzania (DP/FPA/CPD/TZA/8), and Uruguay (DP/FPA/CPD/URY/3).

50. The Executive Board approved the two-year extension of the country programme for the Philippines, and the second one-year extension of the country programmes for Algeria and Yemen (DP/FPA/2016/2). The Executive Board took note of the first one-year extension of the country programme for Ghana (DP/FPA/2016/2).

UNOPS segment

V. Statement by the Executive Director

51. In her opening address to the Board (available on the UNOPS website), the Executive Director thanked the outgoing President and Vice-Presidents for their commitment and support throughout 2015 and congratulated the newly elected President and Vice-Presidents for 2016. She drew attention to the alarming rise in humanitarian crises, a rapidly growing world population, and global warming and climate change. She highlighted UNOPS work to address those challenges, working with public and private sector partners, to provide rapid response products, infrastructure, procurement and project management services in humanitarian and peace operations in, for example, the Syrian Arab Republic and Yemen – experiences it looked forward to sharing at the World Humanitarian Summit 2016.

52. In order to continue to meet those challenges, she stated that UNOPS had adjusted and improved its structure and function, and stepped up its coordination with other United Nations organizations, in particular the International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization, and was strengthening its communications and outreach function. In 2016, UNOPS would combine its annual report with a 'sustainability report', based on the Global Reporting Initiative standards, focused not only on financial but also operational risk, building on private sector experience. It would also join the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data in 2016, working with partners to create, open and use data to help end poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and combat climate change.

53. The Executive Director highlighted that 2015 was a positive year for UNOPS, marked by stronger quality operations and effective structural changes, including the creation of a single new platform named 'OneUNOPS' for its administrative and financial support systems, which had gone live on 1 January 2016. It had also set up an investment committee to advise on the management of the more than $1 billion it oversaw annually. She stressed that UNOPS continued to strive for innovation and to mobilize private sector investment for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNOPS would submit the midterm review of its strategic plan, 2014-2017, in September 2016, which would allow for further course adjustment for the 2030 Agenda.

54. Board members commended UNOPS for its modern, innovative approaches to sustainable procurement and project implementation and management, grounded in the principles of sustainable development as laid out in the Agenda 2030. Recognizing UNOPS clear focus on sustainability in all areas of its work, delegations were especially pleased with UNOPS responsible procurement work and encouraged other United Nations organizations to use UNOPS for their procurement needs, especially given the environment of scarcer resources. They encouraged UNOPS to continue to pursue its sustainable procurement model in ongoing partnership with United Nations organizations, the World Bank and the private sector, an area where it had a particular comparative advantage, especially in mobilizing support for the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, they appreciated UNOPS unique business model within the United Nations system, whose success, they noted, was evident in its expanding budget and activities, with a diverse range of public and private sector actors, and often working in the toughest environments. They underlined UNOPS critical role on the road toward achieving the 2030 Agenda and encouraged UNOPS to pursue its efforts for ever-greater transparency and effectiveness, notably through solid risk management and continued engagement with the private sector.

55. In response, the Executive Director welcomed Board members' continued strong support to finding innovative ways to promote sustainable development, including sustainable procurement, a cornerstone of UNOPS operations. She noted that 2016 would be a transformative year for UNOPS as it worked to introduce a new information and communications platform and a new e-commerce platform to facilitate easier access to partners and promote innovative, cost-efficient quality solutions. UNOPS also collaborated with partners to disseminate information about the United Nations web-buyers website in order to expand its usage, promote innovation and maximize use of available funding to help those most in need. Working with the private sector also meant UNOPS strived to strengthen its risk management systems, which included the recent establishment of a risk and quality control unit, aimed at better managing risk with its partners.

Joint segment

VI. Recommendations of the Board of Auditors

56. The Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, introduced the report of UNDP and the United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) on the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2014 (DP/2016/6 and annexes). The Deputy Executive Director (Management), UNFPA, introduced the report of the Executive Director: follow-up to the report of the United Nations Board of Auditors for 2014: status of implementation of the recommendations (DP/FPA/2016/1 and annexes). The Deputy Executive Director, UNOPS, introduced the report of UNOPS on the status of the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2014 (DP/OPS/2016/1).

57. Board members expressed appreciation with the unqualified audit opinions for UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS, and welcomed the progress made overall by all three organizations in the implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors. There was a call for the organizations, as part of their audit priorities, to continue to focus on crosscutting and emerging issues, including those related to the challenges of implementing International Public Sector Accounting Standards, and to share lessons learned among United Nations system organizations. Delegations in turn commented on areas of progress and improvement for each agency individually. There was also a request for additional information on: (a) the structural changes each organization had undertaken and how they would impact human resources; (b) the benefits realization plan of the structural changes, so that Board members could determine their qualitative contributions; and (c) on UNOPS specifically, further details on when the organization planned to finalize it benefits realization study of its enterprise resource planning implementation.

UNDP

58. Board members, commending UNDP for its progress implementing the recommendations of the Board of Auditors, welcomed the annual opportunity to exercise oversight and take stock of where management had made improvements. They noted in particular the decrease of almost 50 per cent in the number of top audit-related priorities since 2007 and the near elimination of long-outstanding audit recommendations. While welcoming the insights on how to address management challenges on progress against the eight audit-related priorities for the 2014-2015 biennium, they expected more specific information on progress towards implementing the Board of Auditors' recommendations. They requested more detailed information in future reports on how UNDP had responded to recommendations, and suggested exploring UNFPA and UNOPS reports for an idea on the level of detail expected.

59. Delegations were pleased that UNDP had made procurement a top priority and welcomed the preventive steps it had taken to mitigate fraud, corruption and misuse of funds. They were especially interested in the organization's new procurement strategy, were optimistic that it would address capacity and compliance issues, and looked forward to its future impact. They urged UNDP, as well as other United Nations organizations, to take advantage of UNOPS procurement expertise. Board members stressed that UNDP had to do more to address risks associated with its reliance on external partners. Echoing the Board of Auditors' recommendation, they saw the need for greater monitoring of implementing partners, especially national implementation modality partners. While pleased with the rollout of the 2015 revised harmonized approach to cash transfers framework, they encouraged UNDP to continue to prioritize and monitor its implementation closely, and report to the Board in 2016. In that regard, they urged UNDP to invest in quality capacity building for the ongoing rollout of the framework, especially in high-risk countries.

60. On the issue of fraud, Board members welcomed the transparent way UNDP covered it in the financial report, but speculated whether the decrease of reported cases was due to management's intervention or merely a drop in reporting. Referencing previous Board decisions, they stressed that the organization had to make every effort to protect whistle-blowers against retaliation, backed by robust policies known to all staff members. In response to the auditors' report of continued weakness in project management, oversight and progress reporting, delegations encouraged UNDP to give high priority to quality assurance of programming and results-based management at country level. UNDP should also ensure country offices prepared timely reports for all projects and met project monitoring requirements, including updating risk logs. Noting that after-service health liabilities grew after 2014 due to external factors and aware that UNDP had a 15 year strategy to fund the gap between the historical liability and the amount funded, delegations sought further details on the success of the strategy to date.

UNFPA

61. Board members welcomed UNFPA progress since 2015 in implementing most of the Board of Auditors' recommendations. Recognizing that complex working environments exposed UNFPA to considerable risks, they were pleased with progress in developing and implementing its enterprise risk management framework, and looked forward to hearing about its impact in future reports. They stressed, however, the need to ensure that all business units involved in strategic risk assessments had the required training and skills to make it effective and sustainable. They appreciated the significant progress UNFPA had made since 2009 to strengthen country and field office capacity, and were pleased with its efforts to improve oversight through a comprehensive review of decentralized offices and revisions to its organizational handbook. They nevertheless urged further monitoring and assessment of regional and country office capacities, and sought additional information on the overall impact of the regionalization exercise.

62. Delegations stressed the need for UNFPA to have strong procurement arrangements and inventory management, noting that a better shipment tracker would help the Fund to monitor delivery and distribution, and enable more effective supply management. They encouraged UNFPA to monitor the new system and its impact on programme delivery closely. They also underlined the importance of regular tracking metrics at all levels of the supply chain to ensure supplies reached intended beneficiaries in a timely manner. On the risks associated with using implementing partners, delegations commended UNFPA for launching the global programming system, and looked forward to its phase-two functionality; they welcomed its requirement that implementing partners provide regular, timely work plan progress reports before they could receive payments. While welcoming the status update on the new micro-assessment of the harmonized approach to cash transfers framework, as well as the revised policy for selecting and

assessing implementing partners, they encouraged the Fund to use those tools to continue to strengthen its oversight and management of implementing partners.

63. Board members were also pleased with the improved management and oversight of consultants through the review of all existing service contracts to examine terms of reference and ensure compliance with the service contract policy. They welcomed the revised individual consultant policy and the new online tool to assess performance prior to contract renewal. They encouraged UNFPA to continuously review those policies and tools to ensure their effectiveness.

64. While welcoming the Fund's level of transparency and detail, delegations sought greater openness on audit in future Board sessions, and requested that financial reports and audited financial statements be included as an annex to the management response. They welcomed the reduced levels of liquidity in the financial statements, and sought greater clarification, notably on how UNFPA was managing risk and the return on investments. Noting that after-service health insurance liabilities had grown in 2014 owing to a change in actuarial assumptions, they sought further details on the success of strategy's implementation to date. They also requested clarity on the process and risks of transferring funds to manage the employee benefits liability to external fund managers, and the related mitigation measures UNFPA had taken. Finally, they sought clarity on if, and how, the Fund's challenging financial situation might impact its ability to implement the Board of Auditors' recommendations.

UNOPS

65. Board members welcomed the report and recognized the vulnerabilities to which UNOPS was exposed in challenging field contexts. They were pleased by the efforts UNOPS had made to meet and mitigate those risks, notably through the new risk management system rolled out in 2013, which, they noted, would help to establish an effective risk management framework. They looked forward to the impact of that new programme in future reports. They also commended UNOPS for developing a new planning system for enterprise resource planning, and were pleased to see a status update in the report before the Board at the first regular session. They sought further information on UNOPS efforts to improve country-level capacity to apply the risk management system for UNOPS projects, including through evaluations of capacity and oversight of a project's health over its lifetime. They requested more details on how the Board could support those efforts through enterprise development programmes or through enterprise resource management planning. They looked forward to more detailed information on those Board of Auditors' recommendations on which UNOPS had not yet reported and sought clarity on how UNOPS was following up on them.

66. In response, the Director, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, highlighted that: (a) UNDP would continue the systematic approach to documenting its progress in addressing audit recommendations, including providing further details; and (b) the High-Level Committee on Management also had an initiative to more systemically address and reduce after-service health insurance liabilities, including better use of national health authorities and insurance schemes. He stated that the United Nations organizations would be ready to report on that initiative at a future Board session. On the issue of the benefits realization for the structural changes, he stated that UNDP had made good progress, with some benefits to come in the future, and would provide relevant information as requested to the Board.

67. The Deputy Director and Chief Financial Officer, Bureau for Management Services, UNDP, addressing more technical issues, indicated that the UNDP report included a detailed annex that provided the status of each audit observation. He noted that management was ready to discuss with Board members other options for presenting the information provided in a

different format. UNDP, he noted, had undertaken a review of its work with national partners, focused on the different processes followed, an exercise that went beyond the harmonized approach to cash transfers modality to other related issues. He indicated that management had discussed the concept paper internally and had an action plan it was ready to implement within two weeks, which included not only a risk-based assessment model but also options for targeted capacity building at country level, both of which programme countries would incorporate into their country programmes. Examples included the UNDP global database on country office progress in implementing the harmonized approach to cash transfers modality. Here, he drew attention to the 80 per cent country office macro-assessment completion rate and 68 per cent micro-assessment completion rate. In addition, country offices had prepared some 58 insurance plans. He stressed that despite progress, more was needed. He noted, however, that transparency on the implementation of the harmonized approach to cash transfers modality was significantly higher than in 2014, a pace UNDP would strive to maintain while it continued to work with implementing partners. He underscored that UNDP took fraud very seriously both within the organization and with partners, and had, as a result, issued a new fraud policy that encouraged every national partner to have an anti-fraud policy. He stated that it was the Independent Audit and Investigation Office that produced the presumptive fraud numbers, thereby guaranteeing that management could not influence them in any way.

68. He stressed that project and programme monitoring continued to be a major area of work for UNDP, which had devised a three-phased approach, from programme inception to project implementation and closure. Similarly, after-service health insurance continued to be an important area for UNDP, which to date had funded 49 per cent of the liability, a fluctuating figure that UNDP monitored closely and adjusted regularly. It was an exercise that took time because UNDP was catching up on the underfunded liability of the past. UNDP, he highlighted, as a partially funded organization, issued allocations before it received its total funding, which was why it had taken the 15-year approach. On slow implementation, he drew attention to the UNDP accelerated delivery programme that monitored the top ten lagging countries to help them step up delivery; on project closures, a major issue, he highlighted the launching of a new tool and guidelines for old projects that had helped to bring about significant progress in 2015. He drew attention to the independent study being undertaken for both UNDP and UNCDF on the operational reserve, taking in account all the Board of Auditors' comments; the report was to be ready shortly with implementation to begin in 2016. On the standard operating procedures for anti-fraud policy, given its broad scope, he noted that UNDP updated the policy regularly to reflect changes in the individual prescriptive content for any given area.

69. The Director, Division of Management Services, UNFPA, indicated that the Fund had launched its enterprise risk management mechanism in June 2015 with the risk assessment module, an internally driven, successful exercise that had a high compliance rate. The risk response model, to be launched in 2016, was designed in part to raise awareness throughout the organization of the types of risk possible. As June 2016 would mark the end of the first cycle of the risk assessment module, UNFPA would seize the opportunity to take stock of lessons learned which it would incorporate going forward. Its goal was to make enterprise risk planning standard practice for the Fund. He highlighted that the enterprise risk management mechanism also included the fraud risk assessment, which established zero tolerance for fraud risk throughout UNFPA; the risk response model would boost the zero tolerance policy once fully operational in 2016. Because UNFPA was increasingly working in high-risk environments, such as humanitarian crises, the Fund would closely monitor and regularly update its risk management tools to counter emerging risks. While training was a major component of enterprise risk management, the Fund had to resort to exclusively online training owing to current financial difficulties, although he stressed that gaining expertise with the module hinged largely on learning-by-doing. He noted that UNFPA was working with UNDP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on a revised policy to merge the harmonized approach to

cash transfers modality with its implementing partner capacity assessment tool, including user guidelines. On the issues of liquidity, risk and return, noting market volatility in 2014, he stressed that, with the aim of maintaining liquidity and locking into a set rate, the Fund sought to ensure it had access to the funds and, as a result, chose long-term investments; current financial statements, he noted, reflected short-term investments that matured in one year and, as such, the ratio had dropped. He assured the Board that overall investments remained at their 2013 levels; while longer-term investments had almost doubled from their 2013 levels. UNFPA managed its investment with the UNDP treasury through a common policy driven by the need for liquidity, not risk.

70. On after-service health insurance, he highlighted that UNFPA was ranked third among United Nations organizations in funding liabilities, as it had sought to ensure that past liabilities were funded on a yearly basis, and ongoing liabilities for existing and new employees were funded on a monthly basis, having factored after-service health insurance costs into payroll contributions, thereby ensuring the liability did not grow further. UNFPA in turn funded the liability that was quantified (at that point in time) either through end-of-year surplus funds or through income on investments. UNFPA collaborated with UNDP and UNICEF to ensure that their investment in after-service health insurance liability funds matched longer-term liabilities. The organizations were set to hand over after-service health insurance liability funds to professional fund managers in the first half of 2016, the aim being to improve the return by investing those funds in markets that matched the long-term liability nature of after-service health insurance. In closing, he was pleased to announce that UNFPA had issued new guidelines on decentralized offices, as recommended by the Board of Auditors; that the global programming system had addressed the issue of performance indicators; and that UNFPA had successfully addressed issues related to service contract holders. While recognizing the potential negative effect of funding difficulties, he assured the Board that UNFPA gave top priority to addressing the Board of Auditors recommendations.

71. The Deputy Executive Director, UNOPS, addressed three issues raised. One – on the question of the financial situation in the field and how UNOPS managed internal controls given the size of its operations and associated risks – he stated that UNOPS controlled not only the overall costs but also the total costs of ownership, which included all costs that the organization either incurred or charged to clients. There were three such costs: overhead fees, indirect costs, and direct costs. Direct costs were further broken down into those related to headquarters, regions and country offices. UNOPS sought to ensure that over time those costs were kept in check. In 2015, those costs went down by 0.2 per cent overall, although the organization aimed to maintain a level of 9 per cent for charges, all costs included, which was in addition to fees usually disclosed. Two, on the enterprise resource planning system, he added to his earlier remarks that UNOPS had since 1 January 2016 begun a comprehensive review of system vulnerability and fraud risk assessment to ensure issues such as double payment were countered. UNOPS internal audit unit was leading that initiative, with implementation outsourced to an experienced private sector firm. Three, on after-service health insurance and end-of-service liabilities, UNOPS was well positioned as only one of two United Nations organizations to be fully funded for after-service health insurance. Although aware that problems could arise in the future if UNOPS kept expanding, at the moment management was not concerned about after-service health insurance. Finally, on the benefits realization of enterprise resource planning implementation, he noted that UNOPS was already in the middle of post-implementation, with actual results and outcomes to report, which it would provide to Board members, as requested. He stressed that UNOPS, in fact, was ahead of schedule and was already experiencing the benefits of its enterprise resource planning implementation.

72. The Director, External Audit, United Nations Board of Auditors, was encouraged to hear that delegations were in agreement with the Board of Auditors' recommendations, especially

regarding programme and project management, which was a particular challenge for auditors. He also welcomed management's response and commitment to address those recommendations.

73. The Executive Board adopted decision 2016/2: reports of UNDP, UNFPA and UNOPS on the status of implementation of the recommendations of the Board of Auditors for 2014.

VII. Other matters

UNFPA special event: partnerships for addressing maternal and child heath and realizing the demographic dividend: African-based organizations in the lead

74. Board members welcomed the Fund's initiative to create a platform for faith-based dialogue. They recognized the key role faith-based organizations played in promoting and addressing sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, especially among youth, at the global, regional and country levels. They sought to learn how faith-based organizations could mobilize young people behind the Dakar Declaration of Faith-based Leaders in Harnessing the Demographic Dividend in West Africa. They were keen to know how faith-based organizations could eradicate the widely held perception that religion was incompatible with sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

75. Delegations drew attention to the important leadership role of faith-based organizations in changing behaviours, and in driving a rights-based approach to sexual and reproductive health. They sought information on the role faith-based organizations played to promote dialogue to determine good practices and ongoing challenges. The important role of secularism as a platform for dialogue was underlined. They stressed that any approach to faith-based education on sexual and reproductive health, however, should adapt to the national context, engaging closely with national religious leaders. They emphasized that countries should use the Dakar Declaration to counter the radicalization of youth at the grassroots level.

76. Delegations welcomed the proposed national partnership plans that brought together faith-based organizations with the aim of integrating sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights in Africa, but pointed to the need for safety education and awareness-raising in which women and girls played a key role. They encouraged UNFPA – along with the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women – to continue to work with faith-based organizations to leverage their leadership for a gender-responsive approach. There was the suggestion to convene such discussion with the Board on a regular basis.